

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of forming a fine pattern, comprising the steps of:

forming a silicon-oxide-based film over a substrate by using an oxidizing gas containing nitrogen as a material gas;

forming a chemically-amplified photoresist layer on the silicon-oxide-based film; and

transferring a mask pattern onto the chemically-amplified photoresist layer upon exposure through a mask,

wherein, in the step of forming the silicon-oxide-based film, a nitrogen content ~~of the surface of a surface~~ of the silicon-oxide-based film is made to about a ~~non-zero~~ value of 0.01 atm% to 0.1 atm% ~~or less~~.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently Amended) The method of forming a fine pattern according to claim 1, further comprising wherein a step of exposing the surface ~~exposing a surface~~ of the silicon-oxide-based film to plasma atmosphere of O₂ or N₂O ~~is added~~ between the step of forming the silicon-oxide-based film and the step of forming the chemically-amplified photoresist layer.

4. (Canceled)

5. (Currently Amended) A method of manufacturing a semiconductor device, comprising the steps of:

forming a silicon-oxide-based film over an underlying layer, wherein the silicon-oxide-based film is formed by using an oxidizing gas containing nitrogen as a material gas such that a surface of the silicon-oxide-based film has a ~~non-zero~~ nitrogen content of about 0.01 atm% to 0.1 atm % or less;

forming a chemically-amplified photoresist layer on the silicon-oxide-based film;

transferring a mask pattern onto the chemically-amplified photoresist layer upon exposure through a mask; and

etching the underlying layer by way of a resist pattern, to thereby form a fine pattern in the underlying layer.

6. (Previously Presented) The method of forming a fine pattern according to claim 1, wherein the silicon-oxide-based film is deposited at a temperature of 400°C or more by means of a plasma CVD technique.

7. (Previously Presented) The method of forming a fine pattern according to claim 1, wherein the silicon-oxide-based film is formed by using N₂O or NO as the oxidizing gas containing nitrogen.